ON MATING WITH THE PRELIMINARY STUDIES

† {††Yonge's title, A Treatise on the Meeting for the Sake of Seeking Instruction.}

I. FATHER, LOFTINESS; MOTHER, PERSONAL VIRTUE; AND CONSTANT OFFSPRING

(1) ABRAHAM, SARAH, HAGAR

"But Sarah the wife of Abraham had not borne him any child.

(H87. Abram, Abram: Abram, high father)(H48. Abiram, father of height (i.e. lofty))

And she (Sarah) had an Egyptian handmaiden, who name was Hagar.

And Sarah said unto Abraham, Behold, the Lord has closed me up, so that I should not bear children; go in unto my (Egyptian) handmaiden (Hagar) that thou mayest have children by her."{1}{Genesis 16:1.}

> Chapter 16
> Birth of Ishmael.[a]
> 1 Abram's wife Sarai had borne him no children. Now she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar.
> 2 Sarai said to Abram: "The Lord has kept me from bearing children. Have intercourse with my maid; perhaps I will have sons through her." Abram obeyed Sarai.[b]

(2) SARAH, PERSONAL VIRTUE; GOVERNS ME, WHO IS DETERMINED TO OBEY IT

The name Sarah, being interpreted, means "my princedom."

(H8297. Saray: Sarai, Sarai's, Saray, 1. dominative 2. Sarai, the wife of Abraham)

And the wisdom which is in me, and the temperance which is in me, and the particular justice, and each of the other virtues which belong to me alone, are the princedom of

me alone.

> (H8269. sar: Prince, ruler, leader, chief, captain, official, sar, a head person (of any rank or class))

For such virtue, being a queen from its birth, rules over and governs me who have determined on obeying it.

> (3) PERSONAL VIRTUE, BARREN TO EVILS; PERSONAL VIRTUE, PROLIFIC TO GOOD THINGS

Now this virtue, Moses (making a most paradoxical assertion) reports,

as being both barren and also most prolific,

since he affirms that the most populous of all nations is sprung from it.

For, in real truth, virtue is barren with respect to all things which are evil, but is so exceedingly prolific of good things, that it stands in no need of the art of the midwife, for it anticipates it by bringing forth before its arrival.

> (4) CONSTANT OFFSPRING OF VIRTUE; VIRTUOUS REASONINGS, IRREPROACHABLE COUNSELS, AND PRAISEWORTHY ACTIONS

Therefore animals and plants, after considerable intervals and interruptions, bring forth their appropriate fruits, once, or at most twice a year; according to the number of times which nature has appointed each of them, and which is properly adapted to the seasons of the year.

But virtue without any interruption, without any interval or any cessation, is continually bringing forth at all times and on all occasions,

not indeed children,

but virtuous reasonings, and irreproachable counsels, and praiseworthy actions.

II. PERSONAL VIRTUE, PRODUCING CHILDREN OF GOD, GENERALLY; AND FOR US,

PERSONALLY

(5) FERTILITY OF WISDOM; NOT ADVANTAGEOUS OR USEFUL UNLESS IT BRINGS FORTH THINGS THAT ARE SERVICEABLE TO US

But neither is wealth,
which it is not possible to employ,
of any advantage to its possessors,

(Wealth that is not possible to use is of no advantage to those who possess it)

nor is the fertility of wisdom of any service to us,
unless it also brings forth such things as are serviceable to us.

(The constant fertile way of wisdom is no service to us unless it produces these virtuous reasonings, and irreproachable counsels, and praiseworthy actions.)

For some persons it (wisdom) judges to be in every respect worthy of living in its (wisdom's) company;

but others appear to have not yet arrived at such an age (maturity of mind), as to be able to support so highly praised and well regulated a charge (to live in the company of wisdom);

whom, however, it permits to enter upon the preliminaries of marriage,

(To those people that wisdom permits to enter into courtship with her)

(Wisdom is) holding out to them (those mature and worthy minds) a hope that they may hereafter consummate the wedlock (with virtuous reasonings, and irreproachable counsels, and praiseworthy actions.)

(6) AN IMMATURE EDUCATION OF ILLEGITIMATE OFFSPRING FROM VAIN OPINIONS; RATHER THAN PERSONAL VIRTUOUS DEVELOPMENT

Sarah therefore, the virtue which rules over my soul, has brought forth,

but, she has not brought forth for me

(for I should never as yet have been able, since I am quite young, to receive her offspring);

she has brought forth, I say, wisdom, and the doing of just actions, and piety,

> (Personal virtue, bringing wisdom of virtuous reasonings, piety, and just actions, exist)

by reason of the multitude of illegitimate children whom the vain opinions have brought forth to me.

> (While I am still immature in my thoughts and unworthy of a marriage with personal virtue and wisdom, herself)

For the education of the offspring, and the constant superintendence and incessant care which they require,

> (Because it requires constant management and care to bring an offspring of personal virtuous reasonings, personal piety, and personal just actions to full development)

have compelled me to neglect the legitimate children, who are really citizens.

(Those inherently personal virtues are still undeveloped in my immaturity because of this personal neglect)

> (7) <u>CUSTOM OF PERSONAL VIRTUE TO PRODUCE FOR GOD; AND RECEIVING A PERSONAL OFFSPRING FROM VIRTUE, SPECIFICALLY</u>

It is well, therefore, to pray that virtue may not only bring forth, since she is prolific even without a prayer, but that she may bring for us;

> (Therefore it is proper that we pray for personal virtue and wisdom to produce virtuous reasonings, and irreproachable counsels, and praiseworthy actions within ourselves too, not just generally in the world)

in order that we, receiving a share of her seed and of her offspring, may be happy.

For she is accustomed to bring forth children to God alone, restoring with burning gratitude the first fruits of all the blessings which she has received, to him, who, as Moses says, “opened her womb,”{2}{Genesis 29:31.} which was at all times virgin.

> (Personal virtue and wisdom is at all times pure; it does not reproduce for evil. Blessings from the impetus of God meet with the receptivity of personal virtue and wisdom to readily produce, generally in the world, virtuous reasonings, and irreproachable counsels, and praiseworthy actions as a custom, or general practice)
>
> 31 When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

(8) LAMP OF GOD, MODEL BY WHICH THE OFFSPRING IS MADE

For he also says that the lamp, that archetypal model after which the copy is made, shines in one part, that is to say, in the part which is turned towards God.{3}{Exodus 25:31.}

> (The personal reproduction of virtue; the copy of the archetype of God's own offspring of virtuous reasonings, and irreproachable counsels, and praiseworthy actions; is shown in those parts of our own life that are aligned with God)
>
> The Menorah. 31 You shall make a menorah[g] of pure beaten gold—its shaft and branches—with its cups and knobs and petals springing directly from it. 32 Six branches are to extend from its sides, three branches on one side, and three on the other.

For since that completes the number of seven, and stands in the middle of the six branches,

> (That personal virtue and wisdom that is customarily producing on behalf of God alone stands between the six divided branches)

which are divided into two lots of three each, acting as body-guards to it on either side,

it sends its rays upwards toward that one being, namely God,

> (That personal virtue and wisdom that customarily produces to God only sends its light upward to God)

thinking its light too brilliant for mortal sight to be able to stand its proximity.

> (That personal virtue which produces for God alone generally considers that humanity is not generally capable of living near it)